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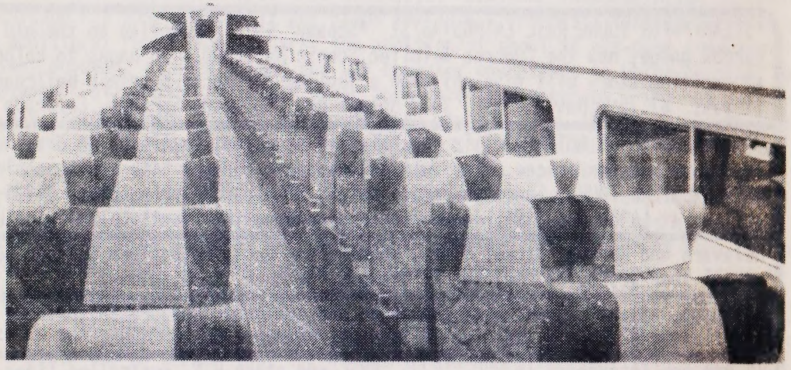

Photos by Paul Rayton.

Railway Passenger Car Annual

Volume II 1975

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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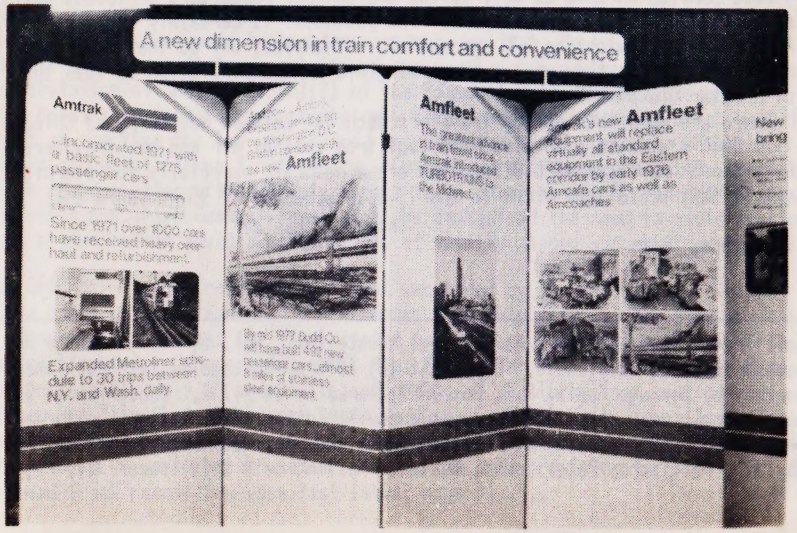

ON THE COVER:

Two photos from the exhibit of Amtrak Metro-shell cars (Amcoaches) at Philadelphia 30th St. Station on July 25. On the rear cover is an interior shot of the high-density coaches. Photos by Paul Rayton. Says Paul, "they can't get those Metroshell cars in service too soon. We took one of the renowned "rides to Auschwitz" when we rode Philadelphia to New York. Talk about filth! And not one car with air conditioning operating! Why should Peggy and I pay $13.50 to sit and suffer in the heat for almost two hours? I could suffer in the heat at home for nothing." See report on the Amcoaches in our last issue.

LETTERS

I have been in your country with the Overseas Rail Study Group 1975 tour, and I was quite impressed with Amtrak (West). I do not think they have been given enough credit for their new policy over food prices on trains. Amtrak meals on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL and (when you could get a seat) COAST STARLIGHT were about 40% cheaper than in Europe, which is quite remarkable.

I was on the "Princess Marguerite" on July 4 from Seattle to Victoria. There were 1600 aboard (!) and it was just like Dover-Ostend on a midsummer Saturday, tho with more scenery and less baggage. No wonder the B.C. government have kept the ship running; it must do wonders for the tours and shops in Victoria.

I was surprised on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED to find that the rear sleeper porter (on the New York car) was a young student and so was the brakeman/flagman. They were so unfamiliar with the route that they opened up the car on the wrong side in Pasadena and nearly left the waiting passengers standing at trackside.

J. H. Price, Editor
Thomas Cook Continental Timetable
London, England

Your "Readers Rate the Trains" article was excellent. Hope Paul Reistrup makes it required reading for every Amtrak employee.

It's a national disgrace when the BROADWAY LIMITED--the only train between New York and Chicago--makes such a poor showing. I know its on-time performance is--ZERO!

Good service on this as well as the old CENTURY route thru Cleveland would be supported by plenty of passengers. The potential is certainly there. Possibly Amtrak feels it might be TOO successful. Otherwise, why do they add routes and duplicate service thru states (West Virginia) whose population is less than that of Greater Cleveland?

There are more than enough travelers each day between New York and Chicago to fill 8-10 trains in each direction just from unhappy air and bus travelers alone. Both the BROADWAY and CENTURY routes are a natural, especially for overnight travel if they could just stick to the 17-hour schedule of 30-40 years ago.

Thomas J. Healey
Cleveland, Ohio

Rail Travel News (formerly Rail Travel Newsletter), Vol. 5, No. 14 (Whole No. 112). Second Issue of July, 1975. Copyright © 1975 by Message Media. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $8.00 per year; single copy 35¢. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Malibu; Jack Ferry, Chicago; Kenneth Maylath, Baltimore; Peter Roehm, Boston. Mailing date this issue: July 31, 1975.

WRECK OF SOUTHWEST LIMITED IS AVERTED

The following report comes from a Los Angeles reader who obtained details over his railroad frequency radio:

On July 26 three high school-age persons attempted to wreck Amtrak train 4, the eastbound SOUTHWEST LIMITED in the city of Glendora, CA, 40 miles east of Los Angeles, by throwing a switch into a dead end track just before the train reached it. The engine man radioed that he was in emergency and was lined into the dead end track. He was able to stop the train just 3 feet short of the end of the spur, and no injuries resulted. Santa Fe police reported via radio that they located a 7-year old boy who observed three teenagers break the lock off the switch, line it, and run from the scene just as the superliner approached. Santa Fe police obtained the help of Glendora police in searching thru high school yearbooks in an effort to establish the identity of the vandals. Agents credited a slow order and the alertness of the engine crew for the averting of a major rail disaster. Railroad officials were said to be attempting to keep the story from the press.

REVIVAL OF GULF WIND HAS HIGH PRIORITY

The Jacksonville, FL Times-Union has reported that Amtrak President Paul Reistrup regards a revival of the Jacksonville-New Orleans GULF WIND as a high priority move. The paper quoted Reistrup as remarking on July 15 that the route has "one of the highest if not the highest potential routes of those under consideration for reactivating passenger service." Senator Lawton Chiles of Florida said he hoped that a favorable decision would be made on the route by early in 1976.

NARP WARNS OF POSSIBLE LOSS OF COMMUTER SERVICE

Testifying before the Senate subommittee of surface transportation this month, NARP president Orren Beaty warned that with the advent of ConRail some commuter trains in the Northeast could be lost. Several passenger routes that have gone "relatively unnoticed" were eight runs generally categorized as "long commuter"--runs not picked up by Amtrak because the ICC defined them as "commuter," and which are not now publicly subsidized. These are: Boston-Stoughton (PC), Boston-Providence (PC), Chicago-Valparaiso (PC), Cleveland-Youngstown (EL), Philadelphia-Bethlehem (RDG), Philadelphia-Reading-Pottsbille (RDG), Philadelphia-Newark (RDG/CNJ), and Washington-Odenton-Baltimore (PC). NARP asked Congress to enact provisions to ease the transition to local support by requiring ConRail to continue their operation for at least one year after conveyance to the new railroad.

In subsequent testimony before the same subcommittee, Beaty warned that many commuter operations that <u>are</u> subsidized may be jeopardized because of the strict interpretation of Section 303(b)(2) of the Regional Rail Reorganization Act, which holds that ConRail need comply only with long-term contracts which were in effect at the time the law was passed, not with the usual contracts which are renewed annually. "Thus," said Beaty, "ConRail or whoever operates the Corridor may be renegotiating all contracts except those covering the EL and the PC services which use Grand Central Terminal." He emphasized the need to avoid precipitous actions which would deprive cities of vitally needed suburban services.

NEWS BRIEFS: The railroad strike threat was ended by the Railway and Airline Clerks Union ratification of the new contract on July 22..... The USRA on July 28 submitted to Congress its final system plan for reorganization of the Northeast rail system. Congress has until Nov. 9 to alter the plan..... Amtrak announced in early July an indefinite suspension of the Turboliner runs between Chicago and Milwaukee which were begun in June..... The Wall Street Journal reports that the Senate passed on July 29 a $2.1 billion public works bill. It is not known as we go to press whether this is the bill providing for money for railroad track rebuilding (see last issue, page 5).....

THE READERS COMMENT

Part 3 of comments from our reader rating survey

CHAMPION: "As I prepared to lower my bed in my roomette I stepped back into the aisle and at the same time was running my hand up and down the edge of the curtain to pull the zipper down. There was no zipper, and a quick ring for the porter confirmed that it had not been on for several trips. Then when I pulled the bed down it was soaking wet. Had been raining all day and leaked in some way or other. I was transferred to next car." (Jack Fritz, Jr., Charleston, SC).

"It's no fun when the generator under your bedroom burns up. ACL tracks north of Jacksonville are terrible; should go the old way, thru Nahunta." (James B. Stevenson, Titusville, PA).

"The observation-lounge car is a great part of this train; the rock music or soul music playing in it was obnoxious (perhaps it was the choice of the attendant). Piped-in music should be unobtrusive!!" (James C. Pakala, Hatfield, PA).

"The employees were indifferent. They seemed unmotivated and acted as if they were along for the ride. The music in the observation car was way too loud. It apparently was some crew member's personal collection of soul music. The rear windows of the observation car were filthy. I feel it was much better as an ACL train. It has improved, however, over what it was in June 1972 when I last rode it." (Kenneth Peale, APO, San Francisco).

PANAMA LIMITED: "John Q. Public would think much of these services are terrible. I, like so many other RTN readers, met several first-time train riders, and they asked whether trains are always so bumpy, dirty, and whether crews are always so distant and aloof." (Martin Reiner, Chicago IL).

"Crews out of New Orleans are untrained. One sleeper is not enough. A full diner should be mandatory." (Amtrak employee, Chicago IL).

"Average train, but could be very good. Has a nice first class dome." (James J. Lundquist, Spring Valley, CA).

"Poor excuse for a train. Equipment generally worst in Amtrak system. Track very poor in comparison with other roads. Crews pushy, unfriendly. Memphis station very, very poor condition. Ticket agents have awful, disgraceful attitude. They don't know a damn thing about other routes and have often turned down good opportunity to route customers on other lines out of Chicago to destination." (Reader, Memphis, TN).

"The waiter was not very well groomed. He looked as if he had just been pulled off a road repair crew. Fingernails weren't clean and had offensive body odor. He acted as if he had never been a waiter before in his life and couldn't care less if he ever learned. Answered questions from first-time diners with answers which ridiculed the questioner. The steward was unorganized." (J. R. Price, Jefferson City, MO).

"From personal knowledge I know that much of the crew is poorly trained if at all. My porter never bothered to turn off the lights in the coach all night. The lounge-coaches used quite often on the train are hell-holes on wheels for those passengers who need to sleep at night. The noise never stops. Much of the equipment is unrefurbished." (Amtrak employee).

SOUTHWEST LIMITED: "I never had the pleasure of riding the SUPER CHIEF in its super days; however, I found it to still be a very good train. Friendly crew, fast and efficient. Seem to take pride in their work and in the train. Breakfast was outstanding, lunch was good." (J. R. Price, Jefferson City, MO).

"Food was excellent, but menu isn't practical; there should be a greater variety of standard items. I abhor mushrooms, and they abounded in nearly every item. First class diner is excellent, service superb." (Stephen E. Morse, Marshall, MN).

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"The Santa Fe crews are excellent and the Amtrak personnel a cut below them--but still passable. The lack of promotion for this train is a tragedy and a crime." (Amtrak employee).

"Sleeping car attendant outstanding. Dining Steward Gaines very pleasant and apparently anxious to give good service. Waiters generally efficient and pleasant. Food ran the gamut from poor to poorer. Example: 'Beef Oriental' tough and dry bits of beef skewered between leather-like green pepper skins. And then the apple pie with cheese! Why in the hell not a slice of cheddar instead of the cheese concoction squeezed out of a tube which, aside from being a taste abomination, resembles yellow worms on the pie? Why no Chef's Salad on menu? Isn't a salad a summer menu natural?" (E. Harry Beltzig, Salinas, CA).

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"Service was fantastic." (Hubert J. Hanrahan, Kansas City, MO).

"Very good dinner. Cars rode fairly well on the bad track. Many slow orders made us nearly an hour late arriving Rock Island. Even at this late hour the station waiting room was open. With better track and new shocks on the cars both RI runs would be very good." (Robert Underwood, W. Springfield, MA).

PEORIA ROCKET (Rock Island): "Patronage is down basically because of poor timekeeping and no promotion. The roadbed is very bad Peoria-Bureau (13 slOw orders as of June 1). The diner is still on and is a good experience." (Robert J. Madsen, Peoria, IL).

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"Imagine running out of bread, so no toast for breakfast! Don't they ever lubricate these sleepers?" (James B. Stevenson, Titusville, PA).

"Equipment very clean out of NY. Lexan windows stink. A/C in my coach died out of Washington. Crew wired ahead from Alexandria and electricians installed new fuse at Richmond. It was unbearable in between, but at least they're trying. The lounge car attendant could have used a course in manners. One diner and one lounge were not enough, even tho the train had only 6 coaches and 2 sleepers (which were well-filled) and it was 'off-season'. The coach attendant was very cynical about Amtrak. He didn't do much to help the passengers' ire when the A/C died." (John S. Horvath, New York, NY).

INTER-AMERICAN: "Crew unexpectedly excellent. Train tries to serve both Dallas and Mexico and does neither well. Schedule needs to be much faster." (Duane W. Roller, Waterloo, Ontario).

"Personnel were extremely accommodating. Hats off to Mr. Walker and others on this underrated train." (Robert M. Olson, Bryan, TX).

"The schedule south of Dallas is a joke. MoPac (which takes over from the Santa Fe at Milano, TX) is doing its best to discourage Amtrak from running this train. It needs to run daily, to make better connections at Ft. Worth, San Antonio, and Laredo, and to be re-routed on the Katy from Dallas to Taylor, TX. I have <u>never</u> seen this train advertised in Texas. Most people in Dallas have never heard of it." (Roger R. Durham, Dallas, TX).

"MoPac and T&P should be required to permit 79mph operation, as their track is the best I have ridden on over the entire Amtrak system. If faster speeds were permitted, overall running time from St. Louis to Laredo could be reduced from present 29 hours to 24 hours, easily. No advertising at all since service began in March 1974." (John A. Mills, Topeka, KS).

LONE STAR: "One of Amtrak's most underrated trains. It has friendly crews, some stretches of good track, including recently improved welded rail in Oklahoma and Texas, clean equipment (except for dome windows), good on-time performance, hi-level coaches, good food. But the dome windows are usually so filthy that they are nearly opaque. The dome consistently runs too warm during the day and frequently too cold at night. The schedule west of Madison City, IA is too slow, even tho 50mins were just cut from the schedule between KC and Houston. This train deserves stronger promotion and the northbound running time should be shortened." (Paul McVey, Benbrook, TX).

"Track surprisingly poor. The train misses the SUNSET in Houston eastbound by only 15mins." (Amtrak employee).

"Rear sleeper was 9210-series, which provides more revenue space and yet provides first class dome lounge service as well, instead of the 9250-series round-end CZ cars. Train should be scheduled to arrive Chicago before 10am, as was done under Santa Fe. This would also save one entire set of equipment. Currently runs with 4 sets, while Santa Fe ran it with 3 sets." (John A. Mills, Topeka).

"Three operational deficiencies: (1) the sleeper-lounge is regularly bad-ordered. (2) The assigned lounge is too small for a train of that size and is overloaded when the sleeper-lounge is not operated--which is most of the time; or when the sleeper-lounge is without electricity, or, in the summer, air-conditioning--which is the case on the few days they do run. (3) The diner has been converted from a

36-seat car to a 48-seat car. This theoretically lessens the lines waiting for food, but actually fails to do so, as 48 seats are more difficult to work and there is no corresponding increase in dining car staff. Therefore, the service is worse than it was." (David R. Peironnet, Gladstone, MO).

SUNSET LIMITED: "Train attracts huge crowds--yet it is poorly promoted and after 4 years of Amtrak, still only tri-weekly! Something is wrong!" (Reader, Canoga Park, CA).

"Amtrak has 'destroyed' some trains (e.g., PANAMA LIMITED) and 'resurrected' others (SUNSET LIMITED)." (J. R. Taylor, East Point, GA).

"One of Amtrak's better trains--fine standards of service." (Thomas N. Tischer, Rochester, NY).

The SUNSET LIMITED sat in the El Paso station on a November, 1974 day as Peter Bretz photographed it. On siding at right are Great Western Tour cars to Mexico. Readers rated the SUNSET overall 14th among 24 long distance trains.

"Until Eastern roadbeds improve, I plan to ride SUNSET/SOUTHERN CRESCENT on trips to Washington DC (I prefer to fly on return from New Orleans to Houston!)" (Robert M. Olson, Bryan, TX).

"No matter what others have said, I thought the SUNSET was a damned good train, and I've ridden it ten times in the last six months. There is nothing Amtrak can do about the lack of scenery. Many of the stations are in terrible shape." (Amtrak employee).

BLUE RIDGE: "I use this train 25 or 30 times per year. The B&O track between Harpers Ferry and Cumberland is incredibly rough. I cannot imagine Amtrak considering a Washington-Denver train on this route if the B&O track west of Cumberland is as bad as that east of Cumberland. Most of the passengers would be litter cases by the time the train reached Cincinnati. The Western Maryland Route (soon to be abandoned) between Cherry Run and Cumberland would be much better except that it would involve a backing movement at Cherry Run. #704 backs into Washington Union Station on Sundays. This delay often causes passengers to miss their connections with the 8pm Metroliner and the southbound CHAMPION. Why can't the train be turned <u>after</u> discharging its load? Lexan makes the viewing of the fine scenery on this route impossible." (Reader, Hyattsville, MD).

EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS: "Slow orders, delays, make this trip excruciating, especially when traveling to/from Toronto and Detroit. Addition of dining car was a vast improvement, but a lounge or parlor car is definitely needed. Trip is much too long, does not allow for connections south of NY." (Tom Smith, Wilmington, DE).

"One of the conductors from Albany to Syracuse gave a continuing lecture on the history of the particular section of the Mohawk Valley thru which we were passing.

of slow orders. Bad shocks on both cars. Rotten track. Try to eat in diner without spilling things--impossible. The worst riding trip I have ever taken! Only 12 passengers out of Chicago. Felt like we would derail any minute." (Robert Underwood, W. Springfield, MA).

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"Equipment very clean out of NY. Lexan windows stink. A/C in my coach died out of Washington. Crew wired ahead from Alexandria and electricians installed new fuse at Richmond. It was unbearable in between, but at least they're trying. The lounge car attendant could have used a course in manners. One diner and one lounge were not enough, even tho the train had only 6 coaches and 2 sleepers (which were well-filled) and it was 'off-season'. The coach attendant was very cynical about Amtrak. He didn't do much to help the passengers' ire when the A/C died." (John S. Horvath, New York, NY).

INTER-AMERICAN: "Crew unexpectedly excellent. Train tries to serve both Dallas and Mexico and does neither well. Schedule needs to be much faster." (Duane W. Roller, Waterloo, Ontario).

"Personnel were extremely accommodating. Hats off to Mr. Walker and others on this underrated train." (Robert M. Olson, Bryan, TX).

"The schedule south of Dallas is a joke. MoPac (which takes over from the Santa Fe at Milano, TX) is doing its best to discourage Amtrak from running this train. It needs to run daily, to make better connections at Ft. Worth, San Antonio, and Laredo, and to be re-routed on the Katy from Dallas to Taylor, TX. I have never seen this train advertised in Texas. Most people in Dallas have never heard of it." (Roger R. Durham, Dallas, TX).

"MoPac and T&P should be required to permit 79mph operation, as their track is the best I have ridden on over the entire Amtrak system. If faster speeds were permitted, overall running time from St. Louis to Laredo could be reduced from present 29 hours to 24 hours, easily. No advertising at all since service began in March 1974." (John A. Mills, Topeka, KS).

LONE STAR: "One of Amtrak's most underrated trains. It has friendly crews, some stretches of good track, including recently improved welded rail in Oklahoma and Texas, clean equipment (except for dome windows), good on-time performance, hi-level coaches, good food. But the dome windows are usually so filthy that they are nearly opaque. The dome consistently runs too warm during the day and frequently too cold at night. The schedule west of Madison City, IA is too slow, even tho 50mins were just cut from the schedule between KC and Houston. This train deserves stronger promotion and the northbound running time should be shortened." (Paul McVey, Benbrook, TX).

"Track surprisingly poor. The train misses the SUNSET in Houston eastbound by only 15mins." (Amtrak employee).

"Rear sleeper was 9210-series, which provides more revenue space and yet provides first class dome lounge service as well, instead of the 9250-series round-end CZ cars. Train should be scheduled to arrive Chicago before 10am, as was done under Santa Fe. This would also save one entire set of equipment. Currently runs with 4 sets, while Santa Fe ran it with 3 sets." (John A. Mills, Topeka).

"Three operational deficiencies: (1) the sleeper-lounge is regularly bad-ordered. (2) The assigned lounge is too small for a train of that size and is overloaded when the sleeper-lounge is not operated--which is most of the time; or when the sleeper-lounge is without electricity, or, in the summer, air-conditioning--which is the case on the few days they do run. (3) The diner has been converted from a

56-seat car to a 48-seat car. This theoretically lessens the lines waiting for food, but actually fails to do so, as 48 seats are more difficult to work and there is no corresponding increase in dining car staff. Therefore, the service is worse than it was." (David R. Peironnet, Gladstone, MO).

SUNSET LIMITED: "Train attracts huge crowds--yet it is poorly promoted and after 4 years of Amtrak, still only tri-weekly! Something is wrong!" (Reader, Canoga Park, CA).

"Amtrak has 'destroyed' some trains (e.g., PANAMA LIMITED) and 'resurrected' others (SUNSET LIMITED)." (J. R. Taylor, East Point, GA).

"One of Amtrak's better trains--fine standards of service." (Thomas N. Tischer, Rochester, NY).

The SUNSET LIMITED sat in the El Paso station on a November, 1974 day as Peter Bretz photographed it. On siding at right are Great Western Tour cars to Mexico. Readers rated the SUNSET overall 14th among 24 long distance trains.

"Until Eastern roadbeds improve, I plan to ride SUNSET/SOUTHERN CRESCENT on trips to Washington DC (I prefer to fly on return from New Orleans to Houston!)" (Robert M. Olson, Bryan, TX).

"No matter what others have said, I thought the SUNSET was a damned good train, and I've ridden it ten times in the last six months. There is nothing Amtrak can do about the lack of scenery. Many of the stations are in terrible shape." (Amtrak employee).

BLUE RIDGE: "I use this train 25 or 30 times per year. The B&O track between Harpers Ferry and Cumberland is incredibly rough. I cannot imagine Amtrak considering a Washington-Denver train on this route if the B&O track west of Cumberland is as bad as that east of Cumberland. Most of the passengers would be litter cases by the time the train reached Cincinnati. The Western Maryland Route (soon to be abandoned) between Cherry Run and Cumberland would be much better except that it would involve a backing movement at Cherry Run. #704 backs into Washington Union Station on Sundays. This delay often causes passengers to miss their connections with the 8pm Metroliner and the southbound CHAMPION. Why can't the train be turned after discharging its load? Lexan makes the viewing of the fine scenery on this route impossible." (Reader, Hyattsville, MD).

EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS: "Slow orders, delays, make this trip excruciating, especially when traveling to/from Toronto and Detroit. Addition of dining car was a vast improvement, but a lounge or parlor car is definitely needed. Trip is much too long, does not allow for connections south of NY." (Tom Smith, Wilmington, DE).

"One of the conductors from Albany to Syracuse gave a continuing lecture on the history of the particular section of the Mohawk Valley thru which we were passing.

He pointed out houses--all historical--some repaired and maintained, others left to rot, but each with its own tale to tell. This conductor is tobe praised for a most entertaining and enlightening trip." (Joseph P. Hearns, Jersey City, NJ).

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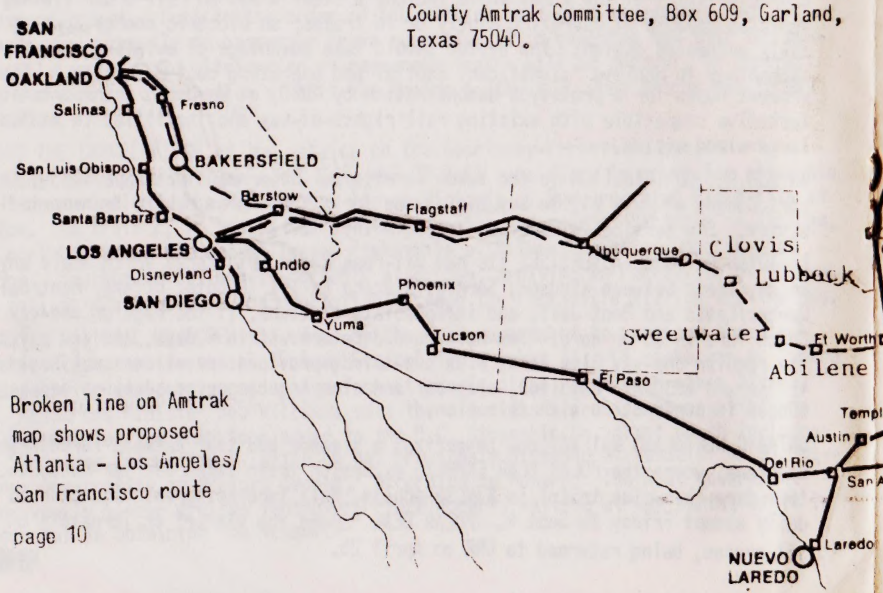

Broken line on Amtrak map shows proposed Atlanta - Los Angeles/ San Francisco route

Photo by Paul Rayton.

THOSE TRENTON FLOODS

About 100 yards south of the Trenton, NJ Amtrak station is milepost 57--indicating miles from New York. If the photo at the left reproduces well enough, you can make out a small hash mark between the numbers, which indicates the high water point of the recent floods at that location.

On July 20 a torrential downpour hit Trenton, on top of abnormally wet conditions during the previous weeks. About 6 inches of rain fell during a few hours. By midnight, water was rising over the tracks, and at 1:40am an Amtrak train derailed, reportedly when it struck a floating tie. The derailment was minor, with no injuries (it was evidently train 235, the last--midnight--departure from New York), but the incident and the high water ended all service thru Trenton for over 24 hours. At one time, 8 feet of water were reported at the Trenton station, which is adjacent to a normally small stream. Amtrak cancelled conventional trains between New York and Washington, but did run Metroliners between Washington and Philadelphia. At first it was thought that service might not be restored for two days, but one track was restored to service at 3am on the 22nd--about 25 hours after the derailment--with all tracks back in around 8am. Full Amtrak service was running again with slight delays at Trenton, but commuter runs originating there were another matter. They didn't get back to near normal for another day.

The flood was the culmination of a week of troubles that started July 16 when a transformer fire during early afternoon killed the PC's 11,000-volt power supply in Philadelphia. Amtrak and commuter trains came to a stop, stranding hundreds. The Amtrak runs were soon rescued by diesel locomotives and went on their way with 1-2 hour delays. But evening rush hour commuter service was scrapped after an abortive effort to organize a makeshift service.

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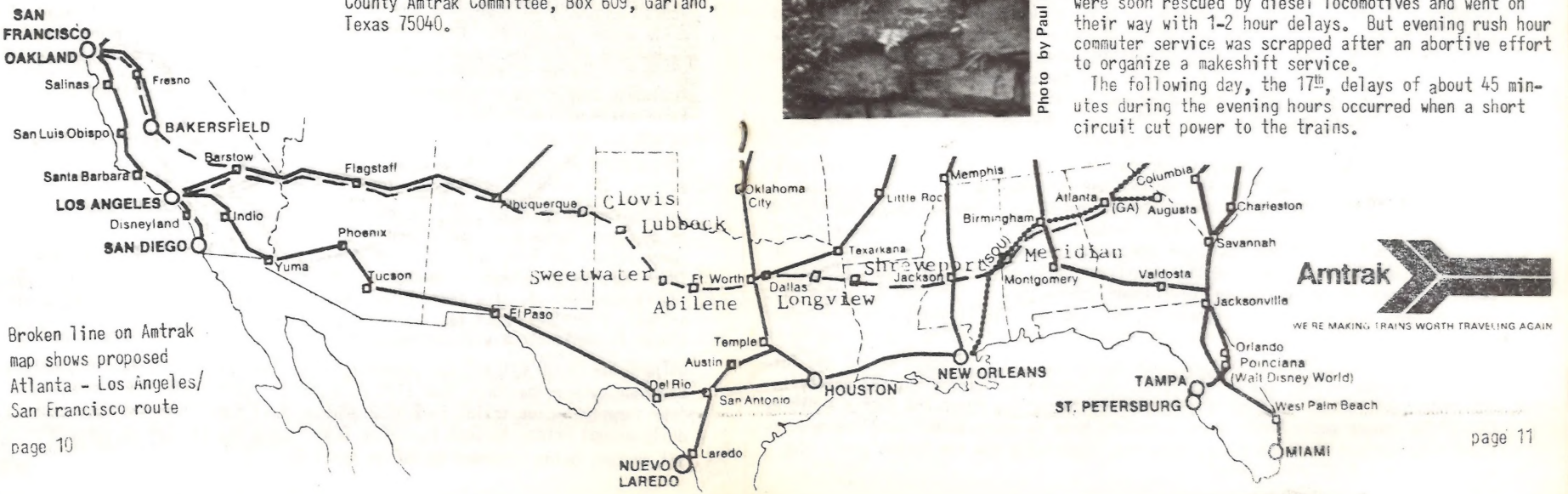

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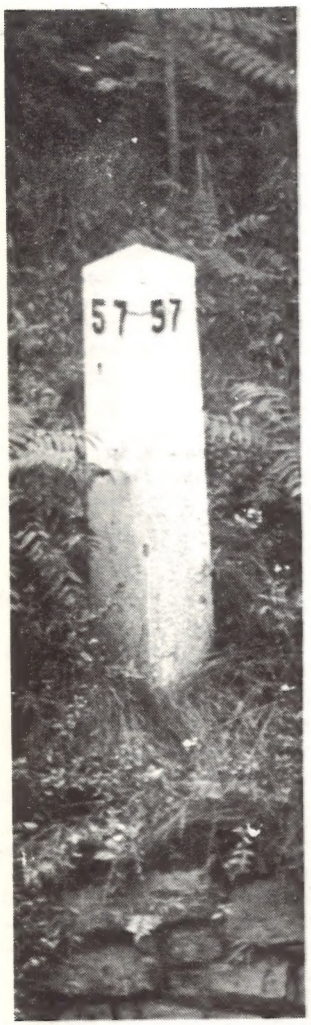

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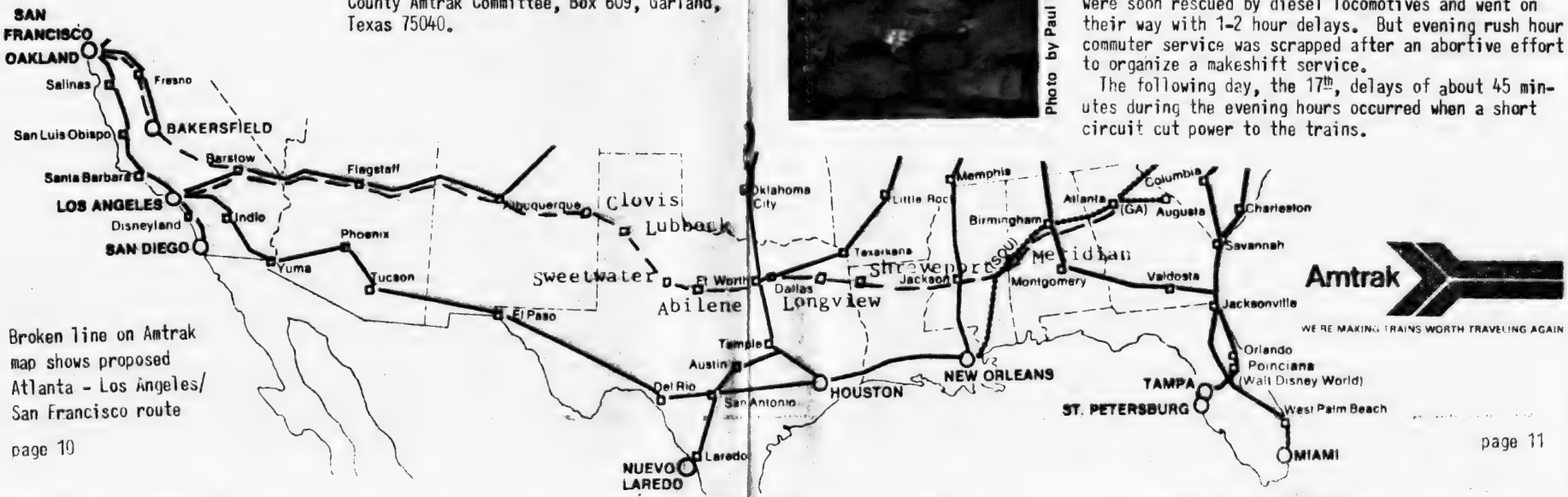

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On July 20 a torrential downpour hit Trenton, on top of abnormally wet conditions during the previous weeks. About 6 inches of rain fell during a few hours. By midnight, water was rising over the tracks, and at 1:40am an Amtrak train derailed, reportedly when it struck a floating tie. The derailment was minor, with no injuries (it was evidently train 235, the last--midnight--departure from New York), but the incident and the high water ended all service thru Trenton for over 24 hours. At one time, 8 feet of water were reported at the Trenton station, which is adjacent to a normally small stream. Amtrak cancelled conventional trains between New York and Washington, but did run Metroliners between Washington and Philadelphia. At first it was thought that service might not be restored for two days, but one track was restored to service at 3am on the 22nd--about 25 hours after the derailment--with all tracks back in around 8am. Full Amtrak service was running again with slight delays at Trenton, but commuter runs originating there were another matter. They didn't get back to near normal for another day.

The flood was the culmination of a week of troubles that started July 16 when a transformer fire during early afternoon killed the PC's 11,000-volt power supply in Philadelphia. Amtrak and commuter trains came to a stop, stranding hundreds. The Amtrak runs were soon rescued by diesel locomotives and went on their way with 1-2 hour delays. But evening rush hour commuter service was scrapped after an abortive effort to organize a makeshift service.

The following day, the 17th, delays of about 45 minutes during the evening hours occurred when a short circuit cut power to the trains.

NEW ENGLAND REPORT by Pete Roehm and Dave Foley

At 12:01am, Sunday June 29, changes were made to the Eastern Route schedules of the B&M commuter service, the result of complaints following an earlier schedule change on May 18. When the "summer" schedules became effective in May, certain trains on the Rockport, MA line were discontinued much to the dismay of their riders. One was an inbound mid-morning train and the other an outbound mid-afternoon run. The MBTA then agreed to re-examine its scheduling to see of those runs could be restored without upsetting the intent of the change, viz. to keep the Beverly-Boston line to no more than one train at a time so track upgrading could proceed with the absolute minimum disruption to daytime service. A way was found to restore this service by making the Rockport-Beverly segment a shuttle-type service for both trains. Another change involved the Newburyport train which had been an "express" run from Boston via a restricted stop in Beverly. This train is now bus an extension of one of the regular Ipswich locals. Newburyport may receive several more trains this fall when the schedules are again changed to reflect corrected track work.

No sooner had the above schedule taken effect than the B&M announced that the contract with the MBTA, due to terminate June 30 at midnight, would not be renewed, as negotiations had stalled between the two parties. The MBTA was standing firm on its demand for a sale agreement at a reasonable price and the B&M Trustees were holding to their selling price--the gap being reported at about $70 million. The B&M said no subsidy and no trains, and the MBTA held firm to no sale and no subsidy. Thus that evening the last trains were posted for the 10:30 thru 11 departures, with no late trains as they would normally depart after the cutoff time of 12:01. Many Red Sox fans that night would be coming by North Station to find that the midnight trains were no more and this would be a slight shock to several destined to points not served, too, by MBTA or private buses.

This writer boarded the last Rockport train at 11pm, Budd car 6208, which, due to the longer run, would be the last car to tie up on the B&M for a then-unsure indeterminate period of time. It arrived at Rockport at 12:24 with extra enginemen aboard, then returned to Beverly Junction and out to Newburyport to pick up that car, thence in to Reading Junction and out to Lawrence and Lowell to retrieve those cars and then all would be stored in Boston. The B&M passenger service had ended.

Tuesday saw buses in Rockport. Michaud, a private carrier, used several Belgium-built Silver Eagle coaches. The service was 4 inbound trips at rush hour and 4 outbound with the last departing Boston at 5:15, a very poor operational setup and one which soured a lot of commuters on the bus service as an adequate interim measure. As well, the fare was a flat $2 each way, cash, no discounts or other benefits. Fortunately this was destined to be only for one day.

During Tuesday, negotiations continued and by late in the day an agreement had been reached between the B&M and the MBTA to sell the commuter lines for the sum of $39.5 million, a far cry from the B&M asking price of $92 million. The official sale date is targeted for yearend or before and includes a management contract with the B&M where they will operate the service and receive 10¢ for each revenue passenger plus direct expenses and relevant overhead costs. The B&M will also receive the right to use MBTA trackage for their freight operations as may be required.

Now that the B&M no longer owns the tracks, there will be an infusion of federal funding to the MBTA and the cost of rehabilitation is estimated at about $20 million. All Budd cars will also be refurbished, since they too are now MBTA property. Trackage purchased extends into Plaistow, NH, and west to Fitchburg with the former opening the possibility of New Hampshire reinstituting service to Concord and Dover.

Wednesday morning the railroad was back to normal. It all looked as tho the future of the commuter rail was on its first step toward becoming a unified entity in the Boston area which would eventually include former New Haven and Boston & Albany lines. No longer would North Shore commuters have to worry about the 11th-hour contract negotiations that had always occurred. Hopefully now the trains won't stop anymore--it's a high green ahead!

NORTHWEST NOTES

THOSE EX-B&O DOME-sleepers are operating on the EMPIRE BUILDER as of late July. Some consists have been going out with two dome sleepers, one ex-B&O, the other ex-NP.

COAST STARLIGHT TRAINS of 17 and 18 cars have been loading on a stub track at Seattle's King St. station to keep the "tunnel tracks" clear for EMPIRE BUILDER, PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL and PUGET SOUND trains. The 5 coaches nearest the center of the train are loaded in Seattle, with the 4 coaches behind the locomotives reserved for passengers boardingat other points. The locomotives extend to a point south of the new domed stadium adjacent to the passenger yard. The dome of the stadium stood free of bracework for the first time in late July, and did not fall in, as critics had prophesied.

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NORTHEAST'S BIRD OF THE NIGHT

by Ken Maylath

An early June weekend of rail activity in New England with an old friend. In order to make maximum use of the time, our choice was a round trip on the Night Owl to Boston. True, the cost of a Washington-Boston roomette at $50.25 (as of July 1) is more than $20. greater than coach. On the other hand, add the cost of a hotel or motel room to the higher basic air fare, and the comparison is quite favorable.

Overnight service in the Corridor didn't exist initially under Amtrak. The old FEDERAL was one of the few runs in the area to fade away when the NRPC took over. It was revived before long with a new name--at first 6 days a week--with a Saturday night departure added last year.

It certainly isn't Amtrak's longest or fanciest overnight run. A typical consist finds a baggage car (which handles some head end business) followed by an ex-B&O 14-4 sleeper, former NYC snack bar coach and a couple of additional refurbished coaches. It is also the only all-reserved conventional train on the route, i.e., into Boston.

#66 was posted on time into Baltimore on a Friday night, but eased in 15 minutes late thanks to some slow running between Capital Beltway and Baltimore. I joined my friend in bedroom D of car 2016 "Thrush". After some greetings and conversation it was off to bed by Wilmington. I noted a slight antiseptic smell--not really bothersome. A rattle or two, but no serious defects in the car.

A fairly good sleep and we were into Providence with a few minutes to spare in spite of the previous night's delay. The schedule is more leisurely than other Corridor trains. Coffee and Danish in the snack car and we pulled into our destination--route 128--right to the minute.

The consist for Sunday evening's return trip was similar--a pair of E units, baggage, 2010 "Bobolink", snack coach and 3 additional coaches. Departure from 128 on time at 10:48.

We were able to request and get a change of bedroom this time due to a couple of minor defects--namely non-operational reading lights over the berths and a taped-over electrical outlet (my friend had an electric razor).

Sleep was even better this time, thanks in part to track improvements which are bettering the ride between Boston and New Haven. I awoke in the morning to note an on-time departure from Philadelphia. Baltimore at 7:40 AM--on the advertised as the usual crowd of Washington-bound commuters waited to scramble aboard.

Those New England rail activities had gone well with the help of 800 Amtrak miles in all on the NIGHT OWL.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"...while nearly everybody is talking about mass transit, no one is really sure what to do about it. And, for the moment, Californians need not beat their ignition keys into bus tokens. The reality is that, while the idea of freeways has fallen into disfavor for economic, environmental and esthetic reasons, we continue to depend on them. Freeways have a mystique, and some of the millions of cultists who make their daily pilgrimages on these great, gray carpets acknowledged, in a recent Los Angeles Times article, that getting there is certainly half the fun. In any case, for better and worse, freeways are solidly embedded in cultural bedrock. They very nearly constitute a lifestyle in themselves for Southern Californians, who spend 10 percent of their time between on-ramps and exits."

--Jeff Levine in California Journal, July

Urban-Suburban Transit

LOS ANGELES AREA has apparently reached some agreement on a plan to get itself on the way to building a rapid transit system. The president of the Southern Calif. Rapid Transit District, reports the L.A. Times, in a July 26 letter to the Secretary of DOT, informed him that broad agreement on how to fund a transit system--with gas tax revenues--had been reached by Southern California agencies and the state Business and Transportation Agency. This development is expected to make the area eligible for up to $800 million in federal funds to begin a commuter system. The mode of transportation and the exact route have not been decided yet, but a broad transit corridor running from Canoga Park in San Fernando Valley to Long Beach and San Pedro has been selected.

THE 111% INCREASE in rail commuter fares asked by Southern Pacific in San Francisco cannot be approved before submittal of an environmental impact statement, the state attorney general has ruled this month.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: New York City is threatened with possible increases in transit fares up to 50¢..... The DOT announced July 17 the award of $6 million in contracts for developing a state-of-the-art safe family car..... An award of nearly $21 million has gone from UMTA to 47 states, DC and Puerto Rico for direct transit assistance to elderly and handicapped persons, the DOT announced July 16..... Late this month the New Jersey senate voted $36 million for operating subsidies for commuter railroads and buses..... Chicago Transit Authority fired two high-ranking employees early this month for leaking to the press plans for a Smile-a-Mile promotional campaign...

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Write for information

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AMTRAK'S NEW AMCOACHES are expected to go into service very shortly on the MERCHANTS LIMITED in the Northeast..... RAILWAY GAZETTE INTERNATIONAL for June has as its cover photo an Amtrak shot of the interior of an ex-SP dome lounge on the SFZ, with contented passengers watching the passing scene from non-lexan windows... BRITISH RAIL REPORTED a deficit of $344 million in 1974..... STEAM ENGINE 4449 will take over the hauling of the American Freedom Train somewhwere in the Midwest, but exactly where still is not known. Some Illinois cities have been added to the original itinerary, and it is believed that track serving them will not accommodate the weight of the engine..... ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD stockholders reportedly are agreeable to selling the line to other roads to keep substantial parts of it in operation..... ONLY COMMUTER RAILROAD in America stil not receiving or asking for public subsidy is holdout SP, points out William D. Middleton in a clearly written summary of the alternatives for San Francisco Peninsula transit--more BART, more SP, or both?--in an article in the current issue of Railway Age (July 14)..... PRIVATELY OWNED CARS carried on Amtrak trains need no longer be painted in Amtrak colors, effective last July 1, Amtrak announced..... THAT SPECIAL TRAIN from L.A. to Las Vegas to publicize the Vegas show "Doo Dah Daze" that we reported on earlier, ran with a consist of one Amtrak diesel, one Amtrak coach, and three private cars: a bedroom-lounge and two diner-lounges, reports Amtrak News. The run took place July 1, and running time was 6½ hours to the Nevada city.....

* * *

AMTRAK WILL ABANDON St. Louis Union Station by the end of 1976 and build an ultra-modern station at the corner of Scott and Ewing Streets. The station will be the largest Amtrak has built to date. It will be designed by Curt Willard of Amtrak's Design Department, according to Amtrak News..... AMTRAK WILL MODIFY the use of lexan in railroad cars windows, an unofficial report says. Henceforth lexan will be used only for the interior pane of each double pane, thus avoiding the scratches that exterior wear create..... AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION announced late in July that its profits for the year ended April 30 had declined, primarily because of startup costs of the Louisville-Florida route. Revenues increased, however, from $21.3 million to $28.5 million..... AMTRAK'S ADVERTISING FOR its Amfleet display in Northeast cities involved ads enclosed by train tracks, reading: "The Amfleet is in." Ads mentioned times and places of "sneak previews" and said: "Be the first

on your block to see the first of the more than 400 new cars in Amtrak's new Amfleet. See the new Amcoach with its smart decor, big picture windows and high-and-wide reclining seats. Come aboard for a look into the future of train travel that'll be running betweenBoston and Washington before this summer is over. Amtrak engineer hats, buttons and postcards will be given out free, so bring the children"..... STATE OF CALIFORNIA has released a 20-year transportation plan (on July 28), and will hold public hearings on it as follows: Fresno Aug 7, San Francisco Aug 14, Redding Aug 21, Los Angeles Aug 28, San Diego Aug 29, Sacramento Sept 4..... UMTA ANNOUNCED ON July 17 that the DOT's StateOof-the-Art Cars, experimental urban transit rail cars, have completed in-service testing and will soon enter service on Philadelphia's Lindenwold High Speed Line. Beginning in the fall, the SOAC cars will run for at least nine months on the line, and modifications are now being made to adapt the cars for the line. After that time, UMTA said cryptically, the SOAC will be refitted with "several innovative subsystems" for a later appearance with "still more innovative equipment".....

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THE NEW AUSTRAILPASS--some more information: 14-day fare costs $70, 21 days $110, 1 month $140, 2 months $200, 3 months $220, all in Australian dollars. The pass is good for unlimited first class rail travel "anywhere, anytime on the rail systems of Australia" for overseas tourists. Details are available from offices of Thomas Cook..... BON APPETIT MAGAZINE, June/July issue, carries a very prettily illustrated article on train dining cars by Karl Zimmerman..... THE SENATE GAVE final approval on July 25 to Senator Tunney's bill for a half-million dollars to begin studies of a high-speed West Coast train system. The house had already passed the bill..... HIGHWAY TRAFFIC FATALITIES in June were 20% lower than June 1973, and 1% lower than June 1974, the DOT reported on July 21. There were 4142 people killed this past June, compared to 5176 in June 1973 and 4201 in 1974.....

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FREEPORT JOURNAL-STANDARD of Freeport, IL gave a big display (July 10) to results from our first train rating survey, in which it was found that the BLACK HAWK, whose crew comes mostly from Freeport, had the highest-rated train crew in the nation. At the same time, the newspaper reported that Amtrak plans this fall to replace the RDC's of the train with conventional cars--three of them, including a snack bar car. The RDC's will be moved to the East Coast, the paper said..... A PASSENGER TRAIN derailed near Delicias, Mexico on July 12, injuring at least 60 people and killing a 5-year-old girl. The unidentified 8-car train was traveling from El Paso to Mexico City, carrying 200 passengers. The victims were all Mexican citizens, the report said..... BROTHER LOU MENK went north on the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL from Seattle July 8, in his business car, perhaps to check out the train that he told Amtrak board member Edward Ullman he would like to see discontinued. To do his little helping hand, Menk's business car was placed behind dome-observation-lounge car 9310, blocking the rear view for lounge passengers. Observers agree that business cars should be placed behind the locomotive when there are observation cars, as on Canadian Pacific..... HIGH SPEED TRAIN of Britain has entered service on the London-Bristol route. The equipment thus far holds the world's speed record for diesel equipment--143mph. The HST will operate at 100mph in the new service, altho design service speed has ben set at 125mph. When the first of the 27 production train sets is delivered, now scheduled for October, 1976, regular high speed service will be inaugurated. The prototype model now operating is a 7-car unit, with a power car at either end.....
THE PROPOSED BUFFALO rapid transit system project has been moved to a back burner by an order by UMTA, to restudy its rapid transit proposals--with emphasis on alternative systems. The system evoked the UMTA order when it requested a federal grant of $20.5 million for design work for its proposed $76 million, 11-mile system. UMTA director Frank Herringer, now manager of BART, ordered a look into light rail, and more emphasis on aerial construction. A 47-mile system is planned eventually.....

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FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION'S track geometry cars T1, T2, and T3 appeared in Oakland, CA the weekend of July 26, for reasons unknown. The electric cars were apparently hauled in on an Amtrak train, probably the SFZ. Cars are used to take measurements of track regularity, sway and roll, etc..... AMTRAK'S NEW SDP-40F engines seem to have steam generator problems, altho they are superb in other respects, operators say. The generator difficulty creates problems with air conditioning on trains in which steam-ejector a/c units appear..... THE RUMOR DEPARTMENT has it that the Amtrak operating department in Los Angeles might be moved to San Francisco..... AFTER ITS DERAILMENT in Kankakee, reported last issue, steam engine 2101 hauling the American Freedom train was removed to the CNW roundhouse and not brought to Navy Pier in Chicago, where the train currently is on exhibit. Reason was the poor condition of the tracks in that area..... THE CHESSIE SYSTEM has for sale two coaches, #1613 and 1623, to be sold as is. Write for into to E. C. Whipp, Purchasing Agent, Chessie System, Blaustein Bldg., Baltimore MD 21201. The cars are in Huntington, WV and can be seen by contacting General Car Foreman S. M. Childers there at (304) 525-0341..... AMTRAK PRESIDENT REISTRUP made a surprise trip to Chicago's PC coach yards late in July, and the report is that heads rolled after what he saw. Following this, he headed west by train, but found that the central computer had lost his reservation, made in a fictitious name.....

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AMTRAK'S NEW AMCOACHES are expected to go into service very shortly on the MERCHANTS LIMITED in the Northeast..... RAILWAY GAZETTE INTERNATIONAL for June has as its cover photo an Amtrak shot of the interior of an ex-SP dome lounge on the SFZ, with contented passengers watching the passing scene from non-lexan windows... BRITISH RAIL REPORTED a deficit of $344 million in 1974..... STEAM ENGINE 4449 will take over the hauling of the American Freedom Train somewhwere in the Midwest, but exactly where still is not known. Some Illinois cities have been added to the original itinerary, and it is believed that track serving them will not accommodate the weight of the engine..... ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD stockholders reportedly are agreeable to selling the line to other roads to keep substantial parts of it in operation..... ONLY COMMUTER RAILROAD in America stil not receiving or asking for public subsidy is holdout SP, points out William D. Middleton in a clearly written summary of the alternatives for San Francisco Peninsula transit--more BART, more SP, or both?--in an article in the current issue of Railway Age (July 14)..... PRIVATELY OWNED CARS carried on Amtrak trains need no longer be painted in Amtrak colors, effective last July 1, Amtrak announced..... THAT SPECIAL TRAIN from L.A. to Las Vegas to publicize the Vegas show "Doo Dah Daze" that we reported on earlier, ran with a consist of one Amtrak diesel, one Amtrak coach, and three private cars: a bedroom-lounge and two diner-lounges, reports Amtrak News. The run took place July 1, and running time was 6½ hours to the Nevada city.....

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AMTRAK WILL ABANDON St. Louis Union Station by the end of 1976 and build an ultra-modern station at the corner of Scott and Ewing Streets. The station will be the largest Amtrak has built to date. It will be designed by Curt Willard of Amtrak's Design Department, according to Amtrak News..... AMTRAK WILL MODIFY the use of lexan in railroad cars windows, an unofficial report says. Henceforth lexan will be used only for the interior pane of each double pane, thus avoiding the scratches that exterior wear create..... AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION announced late in July that its profits for the year ended April 30 had declined, primarily because of startup costs of the Louisville-Florida route. Revenues increased, however, from $21.3 million to $28.5 million..... AMTRAK'S ADVERTISING FOR its Amfleet display in Northeast cities involved ads enclosed by train tracks, reading: "The Amfleet is in." Ads mentioned times and places of "sneak previews" and said: "Be the first

on your block to see the first of the more than 400 new cars in Amtrak's new Amfleet. See the new Amcoach with its smart decor, big picture windows and high-and-wide reclining seats. Come aboard for a look into the future of train travel that'll be running betweenBoston and Washington before this summer is over. Amtrak engineer hats, buttons and postcards will be given out free, so bring the children"..... STATE OF CALIFORNIA has released a 20-year transportation plan (on July 28), and will hold public hearings on it as follows: Fresno Aug 7, San Francisco Aug 14, Redding Aug 21, Los Angeles Aug 28, San Diego Aug 29, Sacramento Sept 4..... UMTA ANNOUNCED ON July 17 that the DOT's StateOof-the-Art Cars, experimental urban transit rail cars, have completed in-service testing and will soon enter service on Philadelphia's Lindenwold High Speed Line. Beginning in the fall, the SOAC cars will run for at least nine months on the line, and modifications are now being made to adapt the cars for the line. After that time, UMTA said cryptically, the SOAC will be refitted with "several innovative subsystems" for a later appearance with "still more innovative equipment".....

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THE NEW AUSTRAILPASS--some more information: 14-day fare costs $70, 21 days $110, 1 month $140, 2 months $200, 3 months $220, all in Australian dollars. The pass is good for unlimited first class rail travel "anywhere, anytime on the rail systems of Australia" for overseas tourists. Details are available from offices of Thomas Cook..... BON APPETIT MAGAZINE, June/July issue, carries a very prettily illustrated article on train dining cars by Karl Zimmerman..... THE SENATE GAVE final approval on July 25 to Senator Tunney's bill for a half-million dollars to begin studies of a high-speed West Coast train system. The house had already passed the bill..... HIGHWAY TRAFFIC FATALITIES in June were 20% lower than June 1973, and 1% lower than June 1974, the DOT reported on July 21. There were 4142 people killed this past June, compared to 5176 in June 1973 and 4201 in 1974.....

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FREEPORT JOURNAL-STANDARD of Freeport, IL gave a big display (July 10) to results from our first train rating survey, in which it was found that the BLACK HAWK, whose crew comes mostly from Freeport, had the highest-rated train crew in the nation. At the same time, the newspaper reported that Amtrak plans this fall to replace the RDC's of the train with conventional cars--three of them, including a snack bar car. The RDC's will be moved to the East Coast, the paper said..... A PASSENGER TRAIN derailed near Delicias, Mexico on July 12, injuring at least 60 people and killing a 5-year-old girl. The unidentified 8-car train was traveling from El Paso to Mexico City, carrying 200 passengers. The victims were all Mexican citizens, the report said..... BROTHER LOU MENK went north on the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL from Seattle July 8, in his business car, perhaps to check out the train that he told Amtrak board member Edward Ullman he would like to see discontinued. To do his little helping hand, Menk's business car was placed behind dome-observation-lounge car 9310, blocking the rear view for lounge passengers. Observers agree that business cars should be placed behind the locomotive when there are observation cars, as on Canadian Pacific..... HIGH SPEED TRAIN of Britain has entered service on the London-Bristol route. The equipment thus far holds the world's speed record for diesel equipment--143mph. The HST will operate at 100mph in the new service, altho design service speed has ben set at 125mph. When the first of the 27 production train sets is delivered, new scheduled for October, 1976, regular high speed service will be inaugurated. The prototype model now operating is a 7-car unit, with a power car at either end.....

THE PROPOSED BUFFALO rapid transit system project has been moved to a back burner by an order by UMTA, to restudy its rapid transit proposals--with emphasis on alternative systems. The system evoked the UMTA order when it requested a federal grant of $20.5 million for design work for its proposed $76 million, 11-mile system. UMTA director Frank Herringer, now manager of BART, ordered a look into light rail, and more emphasis on aerial construction. A 47-mile system is planned eventually.....

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CANADA WILL SPEND about $11 million soon for purchase of three new coaches and three new locomotives for testing for the Ontario-Quebec "corridor" service. They will be selected from the following suppliers:

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